

“Walk By The Spirit”

“... *walk by the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh*” (Gal. 5:16). In verses 16-26 of this chapter Paul discusses the eternal warfare between the Spirit and the flesh. In the verse cited above he assured us that if we “*walk*” after the Spirit, we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. He then states, “*For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary one to the other; that ye may not do the things which ye would*” (Gal. 5:17). It is of this same struggle of which Paul writes in his Roman letter: “*For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing, for to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not.... I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members*” (Rom. 7:18, 23). He then adds, “*For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace*” (Rom. 8:5f). It must be evident that one cannot walk by the Spirit and fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

In verse 18 Paul reminds us, “*But if ye are led by the spirit, ye are not under the law.*” It must follow, then (from Paul’s reasoning here), that if we are not led by the Spirit we are under the law. What can he mean then, in saying “*not under the law*”? It seems to me that he has in mind that those under the law in this instance are those who are under the penalty of law. All are under law for we are to “*bear ye one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ*” (Gal. 6:2). The fulfillment of the whole law is couched in these words: “*Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself*” (5:14). James calls this command the “*royal law*” (James 2:8). Still Paul has written, “*But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law*” (5:16). Since we are “*under the law,*” yet “*not under law,*” it appears that the apostle is saying that those who are led by the Spirit are not under condemnation of the law, while those who walk after the flesh are under the law’s condemnation.

To reinforce that thought consider the next verses. Verses 19-22 cite fifteen evils which the apostle calls the “*works of the flesh.*” These are fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wrath, factions, divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness and revelings. He issued the warning, “*Of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*” Those who practice the works of the flesh are condemned -- the door to heaven is barred to them while the gates of torment gape open to receive them.

But now look at his list of nine things which are the *"fruit of the spirit"*: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control (5:22f). Notice his words as he concludes this list: *"against such, there is no law."* They are under no condemnation. Heaven is open to them. You see, there is a law against the *"works of the flesh"* and when men practice these works they are *"under law,"* under the condemnation of the law. On the other hand when men bear the fruit of the Spirit, they are not under condemnation, they are *"not under law."* Those nine things are not forbidden by the law. Rather they are enjoined upon those who would walk, live and be led by the Spirit. Paul concludes his dissertation about the *"Spirit"* and *"flesh"* in writing, *"and they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the lusts and passions thereof. If we live by the Spirit, by the spirit let us also walk"* (5:24f).

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